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EDITORIAL COMMENT



IMPORTANT TO DELEGATES

As we close our pages, a telegraphic announcement of reduction of rates to San Francisco has been received by the secretary and is printed with her official announcements on another page. This is all the information which she is able to give at present, but delegates should note carefully where fuller information may be obtained and should inform themselves fully in regard to the advantages which are included in this special rate. Undoubtedly a much greater number will feel that they can afford to make the journey with this reduction of nearly forty dollars on railroad fare alone. Of course other expenses will remain as before estimated.

To those who are going west for the convention, there is an unusual opportunity for interesting side trips in the Superintendents' Meeting to take place in Cincinnati on April 22nd to 24th and in the Visiting Nurse Conference to be held in Chicago on April 25th. These stop-overs will break the journey pleasantly, and will add very greatly to the professional advantages to be gained by the journey, with comparatively little additional cost.

From all the reports that are being received, and particularly from the announcements in *The California Nurses' Journal*, the meeting in San Francisco promises to be a most inspiring one. To people from the east or middle west, the visit to the Pacific slope would be of itself a most fascinating experience, but when one combines with this interest the advantages for social and professional pleasure which are provided, the opportunity is one which should be embraced by every nurse able to bear the expense. There would seem to be no other excuse for not going.

We want to emphasize here, for the benefit of those who are not sent officially, that the meetings are always open to nurses, that while one may not vote or take part in discussion unless a delegate, there is great inspiration in listening to the papers and discussions presented, and in meeting the members who represent every state in the Union.

We have given in the department of Practical Suggestions some additional hints for lunch baskets, which were sent in answer to our request of last month.

THE TREND OF AFFAIRS

THOSE of our readers who are interested in the broader lines of philanthropic work which concern nurses will read with intense interest Miss Dock's summing up of the struggle of Mrs. Caroline Bartlett Crane to establish better conditions for the sick and infirm in the almshouses of the state of Michigan. It seems like a return of the dark ages when such conditions as those revealed by Mrs. Crane are allowed to exist in the boasted civilization of the twentieth century. In a line with these revelations come the reports of the investigation of a boys' reformatory at Pontiac, Illinois, which show shocking brutality in the treatment of the young offenders by officials in charge. It was discovered centuries ago, and the truth is confirmed from time to time, that human nature cannot stand the test of irresponsible authority over weaker and dependent lives. There must always be a higher authority to hold in check the cruel animal spirit which so often breaks forth when one human being is wholly in the power of another.

Perhaps because more vigorous efforts by the humanitarian classes are being made at this time, the resistance on the part of politicians against legislation for decency and honesty is more conspicuous. Governor Hughes' failure to remove Mr. Kelsey for incompetent administration of the New York insurance department is one of the marked instances of such political resistance. Undaunted by his failure, the governor, in an address given at the opening of the exposition of congestion of population in New York City, said that while the conditions shown in the exhibit are depressing, there is also an encouraging side, for its very existence shows that the public conscience is awakened and that people on all sides are taking up these questions of civic, industrial and social betterment. "Little by little," he said, "we shall do things."

We feel that what we call the retrograde movement in nursing is, in a measure, a part of this political resistance to a betterment of

conditions for the sick in our hospitals and to the improvement of the educational and industrial standards of trained nurses. We have reason to believe, from what we have been able to gather, that the return to the two years as announced by the Commissioner is of this character, and that back of the commissioner are certain medical men who represent the political and commercial faction of the medical profession. The hospitals concerned are the New York City and Metropolitan on Blackwell's Island, the Cumberland Street, and King's County, Brooklyn.

We realize that temporarily our training schools are likely to be divided into two distinct classes, those that give a thorough nursing education, with reasonable working hours and good living conditions in hospitals that recognize their educational as well as their philanthropic responsibilities, and those which use their training schools as a means of obtaining cheap service, continuing the long hours and unwholesome living conditions which with the inadequate force employed tend to break down the health of both superintendent and pupils, and consequently lower the standard of nursing care given the sick within their walls.

To the first class of schools women of education and culture who go into nursing from the highest motives will apply, while to the second grade will be attracted those of less intelligence, who cannot be received into the first class, or those who enter nursing from commercial motives. We cannot believe, however, that this condition is to be a permanent one.

It will be remembered that some years ago one of the most distinguished reformers in nursing work lost her reason and later her life, because of the goading of a former commissioner. Already two of the ablest superintendents in the state have resigned from schools in the reactionary class, one, we know, because of ill health brought on by just such persecution, and we believe after a few years' trial it will be found better economy for the New York City schools to place themselves among those of the first rank.

For the time being, we must be satisfied to hold to what we have as far as possible, and to exercise a more rigid discipline in the management of our nursing organizations, beginning with the local clubs and alumnae associations, insisting upon womanly conduct and exemplary character as well as professional qualifications on the part of every member, safe-guarding in every way membership in our state and national organizations, that the central power may represent the very highest standards in nursing work.

It is through these organizations that the public is being educated, and that standards can be upheld. With our forces strengthened by such

measures, when the whole philanthropic movement goes forward more rapidly, we too shall begin again "to do things."

RED CROSS NURSING

SINCE the reorganization of the Red Cross Society of this country, the measures taken by it to gain public interest and support, and its plans for an extended and orderly branching of state and local societies have been such as to command the approbation of all well-informed persons. Up to the present time its attitude toward nursing has been intelligent, and its decision to ally itself only with a nursing personnel of proved competence and standing would, if persevered in, bring it in this regard, to the rank of Japan, and far ahead of many European nations, with some of whom the nursing service is the weakest part of the equipment. If, however, American nurses fail to respond to the appeals which are being sent through every state, and the Red Cross should decide to enroll untrained nurses or should be persuaded by well-meaning but uninformed advisers to establish amateur nursing classes, it would lose the confidence of well-trained women who have the interests of the sick at heart and would speedily fall into all the difficulties which now hamper the progress of some of the old-world societies.

Home nursing, or a knowledge of the primary duties in sickness, should without a doubt form a part of the preparation of every woman for home life. But it is surely not within the province of the Red Cross to teach this, any more than to conduct housekeeping classes or kindergartens. If the pupils of home nursing classes really study only for the home they can not be counted on to aid the Red Cross; if, on the contrary, they are to be looked upon as a reserve for the Red Cross, the latter, because driven to it, will be guilty of breaking down hard-won standards of excellence by entering upon the manufacture of a spurious product, and will thus range itself with the correspondence and short-term schools which already exist as a part of our national backsliding into imitation goods of all kinds.

It seems little short of stupidity for one country or set of people to repeat blindly all the errors or failures of other countries and other people. Intelligence should enable us to avoid the mistakes of others, and it was, in fact, the exercise of this watchful and informed intelligence that made the work of the Japanese Red Cross so brilliant and effective in its recent great test. Every mistake of other countries was avoided. Every good point was adopted or improved upon. We can hardly think

that the promoters of this scheme of teaching home nursing have any knowledge of the lessons taught by the Red Cross Societies of Europe. In many of these the nursing personnel is the weakest part of the equipment. Societies which instantly discard an old-fashioned stretcher or ambulance, and whose outfits of medical, surgical, and sanitary supplies are brought up to the highest point of perfection, have yet a nursing service forty or fifty years behind the times, and the reason for this is, in part, that they have made too much of the amateur, volunteer nurse. Their motive for so doing has been a lack of good trained material, owing to the general status of nursing. But this cannot be urged in the case of the American Red Cross. Among European nations those Red Cross Societies are the most effective which have taken their nursing most seriously and have aimed at the highest standards that their countries will support—these are, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries, where Red Cross training means a long and arduous hospital training.

None is less prominent than that of England. The English nurses are among the best in the world, and England has the finest military nursing service, but the Red Cross of England can muster only volunteers, some of whom were described by Dr. Treves in the South African War as a "plague of women."

In France, the Red Cross has developed amateur nursing classes which are a close approach to the theatrical, and so intelligent a man as Dr. Letulle now admits that much of the teaching thus given is an absurdity.

But nowhere in Europe, to our knowledge, is any sordid or mercenary element discernible among the amateur Red Cross nurses. Vanity, vainglory, and sentimentalism there may be, but these women do not attempt to earn their living as nurses, nor do their teachers profess to fit them for anything but the nursing of minor surgical cases. Far otherwise would it be in our commercial commonwealth, we fear, and our Red Cross, the symbol of humane relief, would be degraded to the level of our correspondence and short-term schools whose scholars hasten to defraud the public by pretending to be what they are not, and to have a knowledge that they have not. The glamour of the Red Cross tends to attract adventurers of both sexes. We have learned this by personal experience as well as by observation, and it is a fact that should be remembered and guarded against by the officers of the society. For this reason, if for no other, its nursing personnel should be most carefully limited to those who have been weighed in the balance and have not been found wanting.

The enrollment of nurses for Red Cross service, except in San Francisco, is distressingly slow. The conditions under which enrollment may take place were given in these pages in a recent issue, and we urge upon every woman who would wish to serve her country or her state in time of public calamity to see to it that her name is quickly entered upon this roll.

OCCUPATION

We all know the type of woman who becomes a household drudge, so engrossed in her sewing and her housework that she ceases to be a companionable wife or an inspiring mother. She is blind to the best interests of her family. This same type of woman appears in the nursing world, in the good painstaking woman who is devoted to her profession and who practices it so arduously that her mind gradually contracts into a narrow professional groove, and she ceases to be an interesting comrade to others or to have resources for her own delight. She hardly knows what to do with a vacation when one comes, for she is out of touch with the world about her.

Nurses have much to contend with, for they are more or less ostracized from the social life which flows about them. Those living in a strange city, either in permanent hospital positions or having a room in a boarding house and doing private duty, have almost no circle of friends. It is natural that many of them should resort to the theatre for the amusement they crave, and too much time and money are spent by nurses in this way. An occasional play of the best kind is a refreshing treat and is often an education, but it is a pity to make theatre-going one's only source of enjoyment. Sometimes public dances are resorted to as well, but we believe this to be rare, and surely no woman who has had a good home and proper up-bringing needs a caution against this form of diversion.

The nurse who has ever had any interests other than medical ones should cling to them with both hands, for she needs them.

A music teacher has related that her pupils often come to her with the longing remark: "Oh if I could only play as you do." Her reply is always the same: "If you really want to, you will." Is it not true of all of us that if we really want to keep up some of our old interests and tastes we may manage to do it, and the ingenuity required to fit them in adds spice to the game.

When some one says: "I used to play well, but I never touch the piano now, I do not have time," we know by her own confession that

she is not really at heart a musician. If she were, she could not keep away from the piano. Have you not known some pupil nurse who made the evenings sweet for her companions by her playing, and who kept herself in practice during her training-school days simply by improving the opportunities before her? She would manage occasionally to attend a concert; perhaps she was tired and it was hard to stay up late, but she was a better woman and a better nurse for having given her soul a chance to expand.

It is the same with reading. The woman who is interested in history in the making as given in the daily papers, will not let weeks go by without glancing at one, ignorant of what is happening outside the hospital. Perhaps she is an overburdened superintendent, but if such knowledge is really delightful to her she will have it, somehow, and she will inspire her associates to be better informed women, and will be able to set the example of not talking shop out of hours.

The woman who loves the best literature will find it, and will not feed continually on the short story of the magazine. Often in the houses of the uncultured she will find nothing to satisfy her longing but the complete works of William Shakespeare, in one bulky volume with impossible print. Oddly enough Shakespeare seems as much a part of household furnishing as the parlor sofa, though neither he or the family show evidence of intimate acquaintance with each other. It is a pity that so many women, after leaving school allow their weariness of body or mind to shut them away from books that they once enjoyed, thinking that when they have more leisure they will read something better than the Sunday paper. The chances are that they never will, one's taste so soon deteriorates and one's very understanding seems to dwindle.

The nurse who has the gift of sewing well will have with her always some work to pick up, not requiring too close attention, and when she comes home from a case what a good time awaits her in a regular dress-making bout.

Let us not be misunderstood, we are not commending the young woman who goes to care for a child and allows the nurse maid to do all the work while she studies up golf from a book she has brought with her; or the would-be musician who drives her patient distracted by playing badly at odd moments, or the excellent sewer who makes a whole shirt waist while her patient would like to be read to, but will not ask. We are advocating the use of time which really belongs to the nurse for pursuing occupations which will make life brighter for herself and will make her more companionable to her patients. To those with many

interests life does not seem long enough to accomplish all there is to do, and the doing is joyous.

THE ENFORCEMENT OF REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

SEVERAL instances of the illegal use of the R. N. have been brought to the attention of the president of the New York State Nurses' Association, who authorizes us to state that that association will proceed to investigate every such charge, and take such measures for the punishment of the offenders as the provision of the law allows. In making charges of this character, it is very necessary for those preferring such to be absolutely sure that they are right. There must be not only hearsay, but absolute evidence, which can be sustained in court.

We have received a number of communications during the year from nurses in different sections of the country who have signed themselves "G. N." One of these was a nurse holding a position in a private hospital, who was advised by the proprietor of that institution to add the G. N. to her signature, as he thought it added dignity to her position. There is no dignity attached to the letters G. N. that we know of, and nurses using such letters are showing the desire to be ranked with registered nurses, when they are either not eligible for registration or are unwilling to submit to the conditions.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PRIVATE DUTY NURSES

Two months ago we commented in these pages upon the fact that we were receiving very few contributions of any kind from nurses engaged in the field of private duty. This seems to have aroused the pride of many of our readers who have, in the numerous contributions sent us since, demonstrated that our criticism was unfair. Evidently it was not lack of ideas, but timidity as to their ability to put them in shape for publication, which caused their silence. The awakening has been most encouraging.

We have evidence almost every day, in letters that come to us, of a cordial interest in the JOURNAL's welfare which seems to be almost universal.

